

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L AMMAN 0602

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, JO, SA, US, XF
SUBJECT: TALK WITH INFORMATION MINISTER ABU ODEH

1. WE HAD USEFUL TALK WITH MININFO ABU ODEH
JANUARY 18 ON WHICH HE MADE NUMBER OF POINTS ON PEACE
NEGOTIATIONS AND SAUDI ARABIA. WE FORWARD THESE COMMENTS
BECAUSE ABU ODEH POSSESSES A FRESH INSIGHT WHICH HAS
CONSIDERABLE INFLUENCE ON HIGH-LEVEL JORDANIAN OPINIONS.

2. ON PEACE NEGOTIATIONS:

A) HE THOUGHT DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES WAS
NEEDED FROM JERUSALEM. ARABS LEADERS HAVE A SENSE OF NEED
FOR PRINCIPLES WHICH WILL REASSURE THEM ON WHERE
THINGS ARE GOING AND PROTECT THE LEADERS FROM
DOMESTIC CRITICISM BY ALLOWING THE LEADERS TO CITE,
AS THEY DO CONSTANTLY WITH 242, THEIR ADHERENCE TO
THE PRINCIPLES TO DEFEND AGAINST CRITICS;

B) PRINCIPLES, EVEN IF AMBIGUOUS, COMING FROM
JERUSALEM WILL BE HELPFUL. THE ARABS WILL CLING
TO THEIR OWN INTERPRETATION FOR DOMESTIC CONSUMPTION AND
PERMIT THE ISRAELIS THEIR OWN VIEWS;

C) WORK SHOULD ALSO GO AHEAD ON SOME OF THE
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GUIDELINES OF A WEST BANK SETTLEMENT WHICH CAN HELP TO
NARROW DIFFERENCES ON MODALITIES;

D) JORDAN CANNOT PRODUCE ANY SORT OF A DETAILED
PLAN FOR WEST BANK PEACE; IT WILL LOOK LIKE KING
HUSSEIN HAS ABANDONED HIS ADHERENCE TO 242 IF HE
DOES; EGYPT MIGHT BE ABLE TO DO THIS; AND

E) ANY ARRANGEMENTS OR GUIDING IDEAS

WORKED OUT ON THE WEST BANK SETTLEMENT SHOULD BE
TIMED TO COME OUT AT SAME TIME AS, AND OTHERWISE
BE CAREFULLY LINKED TO, A DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES,
SINCE OTHERWISE THE ARABS WILL THINK THAT THE WEST
BANK ARRANGEMENTS HAVE SUPERSEDED THE PRINCIPLES.
(COMMENT: THIS STRIKES US AS SOMEWHAT UNREALISTIC, ABU ODEH
MENTIONED IT SEVERAL TIMES.)

3. ON HIS RECENT VISIT TO SAUDI ARABIA, HIS FIRST;

A) HE FOUND A NEW YOUNGER ELEMENT, WELL EDUCATED,
BUT ALSO QUESTIONING;

B) HE FOUND SAUDI LEADERS WHO THOUGHT THAT BY MOUTHING
SOME OF THE PROGRESSIVE IDEAS OF THE IRAQIS, SYRIANS,
AND PLO THEY COULD BECOME ACCEPTED BY, OR AT LEAST
NOT BE DISTURBED BY, THE ATTACKS OF THE PROGRESSIVES;

C) SAUDIS CARRIED A CHIP ON THEIR SHOULDER.
SAUDI MININFO TOLD HIM "IN THE PAST PEOPLE USED TO
COME TO TAKE PICTURES OF US, NOW THEY COME BECAUSE
WE ARE IMPORTANT;"

D) SOME TOLD HIM THAT "SAUDI ARABIA HAS THE
WEALTH, BUT NEEDS ENLIGHTENED LEADERSHIP. WE DO
NOT HAVE THOSE KINDS OF LEADERS NOW", IMPLYING THAT
THE PRESENT LEADERSHIP WAS NOT COMPETENT TO HANDLE
SAUDI ARABIA'S KEY ROLE;

E) HE WAS SHOCKED BY SAUDI'S PERMITTING LEFTISTS
TO USE THEIR MAGAZINES TO CRITICIZE THE SADAT INITIATIVE
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AND FELT IN THE PRESENT TIME OF FERMENT SUCH CRITICISM
WITH ITS UNHELPFUL IDEAS WOULD FALL ON FERTILE GROUND;

F) MOST SAUDIS HE MET WERE SHOCKED AND DISTURBED
BY SADAT INITIATIVE AND CONSIDERED IT AN AFFRONT TO ISLAM;

G) SAUDIS OPERATE FROM WITHIN A SECURE "FORTRESS"
AND THEY THEREFORE ARE WILLING TO HELP CLIENT STATES AND ORGAN-
IZATIONS. HOWEVER, PLO HAS SET THE PACE OF A SYSTEM OF RELATIONS
WHICH REQUIRES THAT THE CLIENT STATE MUST THREATEN
THE SAUDI FORTRESS PHYSICALLY BEFORE THE SAUDIS WILL
"THROW OUT BAGS OF MONEY" TO GET THE THREATENING STATE
TO GO AWAY FOR A WHILE; AND

H) MANY OF THE YOUNG LEADERS ARE FRANK AND
STRAIGHTFORWARD, AND UNHAPPILY CAUGHT UP IN LEFTIST
IDEAS; FAHD IS SMOOTHER AS IS MOST OF THE TRADITIONAL
LEADERSHIP, BUT WILL TELL ANYONE WHAT HE THINKS THEY
WANT TO HEAR.

4. THIS WAS ABU ODEH'S FIRST VISIT. HE EXPECTED A
MORE RIGID CONSERVATIVE SOCIETY. HE IS A PALESTINIAN,
STRONGLY ATTACHED TO THE HASHEMITES, WHO HAS BEEN IN
THE PAST BOTH A BAATHIST AND COMMUNIST. HE IS STRONGLY
CAUGHT UP IN PROPAGANDA ACTIVITIES AND FRANK AND

OUTSPOKEN. HE RAN THE JORDAN INFORMATION CAMPAIGN DURING THE
1970 CIVIL WAR WITH THE PLO. WE REPORT HIS COMMENTS FOR WHAT
THEY ARE WORTH AND WOULD BE GRATEFUL FOR ANY PERSPECTIVE
JIDDA HAS TO OFFER. KING HUSSEIN HAS TOLD US OF HIS
CONCERN AT THE REPORT WHICH ABU ODEH HAS BROUGHT BACK WITH
HIM.
PICKERING

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